



## DECISION MEMO

### *Wildfire Tree Planting – Moose Creek 1 Project*



USDA Forest Service, Northern Region  
Nez Perce – Clearwater National Forest  
Moose Creek Ranger District  
Idaho County, Idaho

#### **I. Background**

I have decided to authorize the Wildfire Tree Planting – Moose Creek 1 project located on the Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests. Stand locations are found in the tables and maps below.

The project is located in the Johnson Bar fire of 2014 and the Wash fire of 2015 on the Moose Creek Ranger District. The Wash fire re-burned a portion of the Otter fire of 2013, which was a re-burn of the Slims Fire of 2003. The Wash fire has had two mass soil movements into Meadow Creek, which feeds the Selway River. Along with other post-fire recovery and restoration efforts, the Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests looked for opportunities to recover the economic value, where appropriate, to offset the costs of restoration in fire-affected areas. A rapid assessment process used a coarse filter / fine filter approach to eliminate burned areas from consideration for salvage. 'Coarse filters' included designated Wilderness, Idaho Roadless Rule areas, Wild and Scenic River areas, Research Natural Areas, Riparian Habitat Conservation Areas, landslide-prone areas, etc. The 'Fine filter' approach then evaluated the remaining burned areas using a restoration-based framework. Among other criteria, areas of 50% or greater mortality that would not be economically feasible, due to timber not meeting merchantability standards, accessibility, etc. were dropped for proposed salvage. (The area proposed for the Wildfire Tree Planting - Moose Creek 1 project met this criteria.) These areas would be restored through natural regeneration and planting native tree species where planting is needed.

#### **II. Purpose and Need**

The Wildfire Tree Planting project is intended to improve the overall health, structure and vigor of the stands within this larger wildfire-impacted landscape over the long term. By planting Western white pine, western larch and ponderosa pine, the project would help reestablish and promote the diversity of the forested component in the burned area. Relying on natural regeneration in the proposed project area would result in stands dominated primarily by grand fir and Douglas fir, species susceptible to root disease and stem decay, and likely to have low survival rates. Western white pine, western larch and ponderosa pine are more resistant to root disease and stem decay and being shade intolerant species tend to be more fire resistant and longer lived than shade tolerant species.

The project would meet the requirements of the National Forest Management Act which states that *"All forested lands in the National Forest System shall be maintained in appropriate forest cover with species of trees, degree of stocking, rate of growth, and conditions of stand designed to secure*

*maximum benefits of multiple use sustained yield management in accordance with land management plans.”*

**Project Design / Equipment:** The Moose Creek Ranger District will plant seedlings of western white pine, western larch and ponderosa pine with Douglas-fir and western red cedar interplanted where appropriate. Tree planting will occur in stands burned during 2014 (Johnson Bar) and 2015 (Wash) without timber salvage operations.

The project will plant trees on approximately 1480 acres (167 stands; see Tables below) distributed between the two fire areas: Johnson Bar Fire = 565 acres (58 stands) and Wash Fire = 915 acres (109 stands). The seedlings will be one year-old stock planted on a 10 x 10 foot spacing at approximately 400 trees per acre. Planting will be done using hand tools by a contract crew with oversight by Forest Service personnel. No mechanical equipment will be used. There will be no other ground disturbing activities associated with the proposed action. Access to the sites will only be by existing roads. The project does not change access restrictions. During wet conditions driving full size vehicles on roads will be limited and ATVs or walking used to access the stands instead to minimize damage to roads.

Surveys would be conducted after the first and third growing seasons to monitor the survival and condition of the planted trees.

Project Implementation: Work will start in the spring of 2017 and may last through 2022. Planting will occur during the spring or fall of the year, approximately late April to late May and late September to early October.

Design Criteria include, but are not limited to:

- No roads or landings will be constructed.
- No mechanical equipment will be used for planting activities.
- Use of motorized equipment (such as All Terrain Vehicles), other than hand held equipment such as power saws, will not be permitted off designated roads in the project areas.
- Experienced Silviculture personnel shall be involved in designing vegetation treatments.

### **III. Rationale for Decision and Reasons for Categorically Excluding the Decision**

Based on information in this document and the project record, I have determined this project is not significant in either context or intensity (40 CFR 1508.27), that no extraordinary circumstances affecting resource conditions exist (36 CFR 220.6), that this project may be categorically excluded from documentation in an EA or EIS, and that it meets all the criteria outlined in 36 CFR 220.6(d)(11): *Post-fire rehabilitation activities, not to exceed 4,200 acres (such as tree planting, fence replacement, habitat restoration...), to repair or improve lands unlikely to recover to a management approved condition from wildland fire damage, or to repair or replace minor facilities damaged by fire.*

The rationale for my decision is based on: (1) the proposed action fully meeting the criteria for Categorical Exclusions, (2) the proposed action meeting the purpose and need, (3) the findings related to extraordinary circumstances, discussed below, (4) the project's consistency with laws

and regulations, (5) the on-the-ground review and discussion with District resource specialists, and (6) my review of the Biological Assessments (BA), Biological Evaluations (BE), and specialists' reports.

### **Finding of the Absence of Extraordinary Circumstances to Resource Conditions**

Based on the findings for resource conditions described below, I have determined that no extraordinary circumstances are associated with my decision. Forest Service direction at 36 CFR 220.6(b) describes the resource conditions that should be considered in determining whether extraordinary circumstance related to the proposed action warrant further analysis and documentation in an EIS or EA.

Additionally, 36 CFR 220.6(b) states, *“The mere presence of one of more of these resource conditions does not preclude use of a categorical exclusion. It is the existence of a cause-effect relationship between a proposed action and the potential effect on these resource conditions and if such a relationship exists, the degree of the potential effect of a proposed action on these resource conditions that determines whether extraordinary circumstances exist.”*

#### **1. Federally listed threatened or endangered species or designated critical habitat, species proposed for Federal listing or proposed critical habitat or Forest Service sensitive species.**

The Interdisciplinary Team (IDT) Botanist has determined the proposed action will have “no effect” to species listed as federally threatened or endangered or their habitats. Evergreen kittentail and Payson’s milkvetch, R1 Sensitive species, are present in the tree planting units. Both of these species have likely increased after the wildfires. Individual plants may be mechanically harmed during planting, there are no concerns for species viability.

The IDT Wildlife Biologist determined the proposed action will have “no effect” to Canada lynx and “no jeopardy to North American wolverine or their habitats. A “may adversely impact individuals or habitat” determination was made for black-backed woodpecker, fisher, fringed, long-eared and long-legged myotis, gray wolf, Townsend’s big-eared bat, and Western (boreal) toad. Overall, the effects would be minor and of short duration and would not result in a loss of viability, nor cause a trend towards federal listing or a loss of species viability range wide.

The IDT Fish Biologist determined the proposed action would have “no effect” on bull trout, steelhead trout, and fall chinook salmon, federally threatened species, because the species and designated critical habitat do not occur within the project area. The biologist also determined the proposed action would have “no impact” on R1 Sensitive species or their habitats since the species do not occur within the project area.

Based on the above assessment, no effects exist that will cause an incremental cumulative effect and no extraordinary circumstances were identified for these resources. For the complete analyses, see the Fishery, Wildlife and Botany Biological Assessments and Evaluations and specialists' reports in the project record.

## **2. Floodplains, wetlands or municipal watersheds.**

No direct or indirect significant, adverse effects to floodplains, wetlands, or municipal watersheds are proposed or expected for this project. No adverse effects to streams and no measureable increase in sediment would occur (Hand-planting, vehicle travel on existing roads only). Overall net benefits to watershed, soil and aquatic resources are expected with this project due to accelerated restoration of canopy and evapotranspiration processes, rooting strength and organic matter inputs (fine and coarse woody material, litter, soil organic matter).

No cumulative significant, adverse effects to floodplains, wetlands, or municipal watersheds are proposed or expected for this project. Cumulative effects would be most noticeable at the site scale (if they occur), becoming progressively less discernible at the sub-watershed, watershed, and sub-basin scales. Given the low degree of anticipated site-level effects, cumulative effects are expected to be negligible.

The proposed project is consistent with all applicable State and Federal water quality laws for water resources. The activities are also consistent with soil and water standards in the Clearwater National Forest Plan, including the PACFISH amendment.

Based on this analysis, no extraordinary circumstances were identified regarding the effects to water quality of streams within the area; downstream waters; or resources in floodplains, wetlands, and municipal watersheds; thereby complying with EO 11988, EO 11990, and FSH 1909.15 Chapter 31.2.2.

## **3. Congressionally designated areas, such as Wilderness, Wilderness Study Areas or National Recreation Areas.**

The project area is not located in any congressionally designated area, and therefore, no extraordinary circumstances were identified to these resources.

## **4. Inventoried Roadless areas or potential wilderness areas.**

The project is not located in a potential wilderness area or within an inventoried roadless area; therefore, the proposed action will have no effect on Roadless characteristics as identified in 36 CFR 294.

## **5. Research Natural Areas.**

The proposed activities are not within or adjacent to any Research Natural Areas.

## **6. American Indians and Alaska native religious or cultural sites.**

The Forest Cultural Resource Specialist determined the project has little likelihood to adversely affect cultural properties, assuming such properties were present. Therefore, no extraordinary circumstances were identified to native religious or cultural sites.

## **7. Archaeological sites or historical properties or areas.**

The Idaho State Historic Preservation Officer, or the Forest Archaeologist via the use of the North Idaho Programmatic Agreement, has determined that no archaeological or historic property will be adversely affected by this project. Therefore, no extraordinary circumstances were identified to these resources.

**IV. Interested and Affected Agencies, Organizations, and Persons Contacted**

The proposed action – tree planting in two burn areas – is considered limited in context and intensity, and therefore scoping was conducted internally on the Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests. The Small NEPA Interdisciplinary Team was scoped on April 6, 2017 with no significant effects or extraordinary circumstances identified.

**V. Findings Required by other Laws**

Based on my review of the actions associated with this project, I find that the Wildfire Tree Planting – North Fork 2 Project is consistent with applicable Federal, state and local laws and regulations, including the standards and guidelines contained in the 1987 Clearwater National Forest Plan, as amended, as required by the National Forest Management Act of 1976.

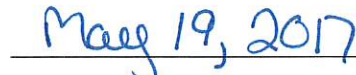
**VI. Contact Person**

Questions regarding this decision should be sent to Jeff Chynoweth, Small NEPA Team Planner, c/o Nez Perce – Clearwater Supervisor's Office, 903 Third Street, Kamiah, Idaho 83536 or by telephone to (208) 935-4260 or FAX at (208) 935-4275 during business hours (M-F, excluding Federal holidays, 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., PST).

**VII. Signature of Deciding Officer**



JENNIFER B. BLAKE  
District Ranger  
Moose Creek Ranger District



Date

cc: Clare Brick

Enclosures (5): Tables (2) and Maps (3)

Table 1: Wildfire Tree Planting – Moose Creek / Johnson Bar Fire Stands

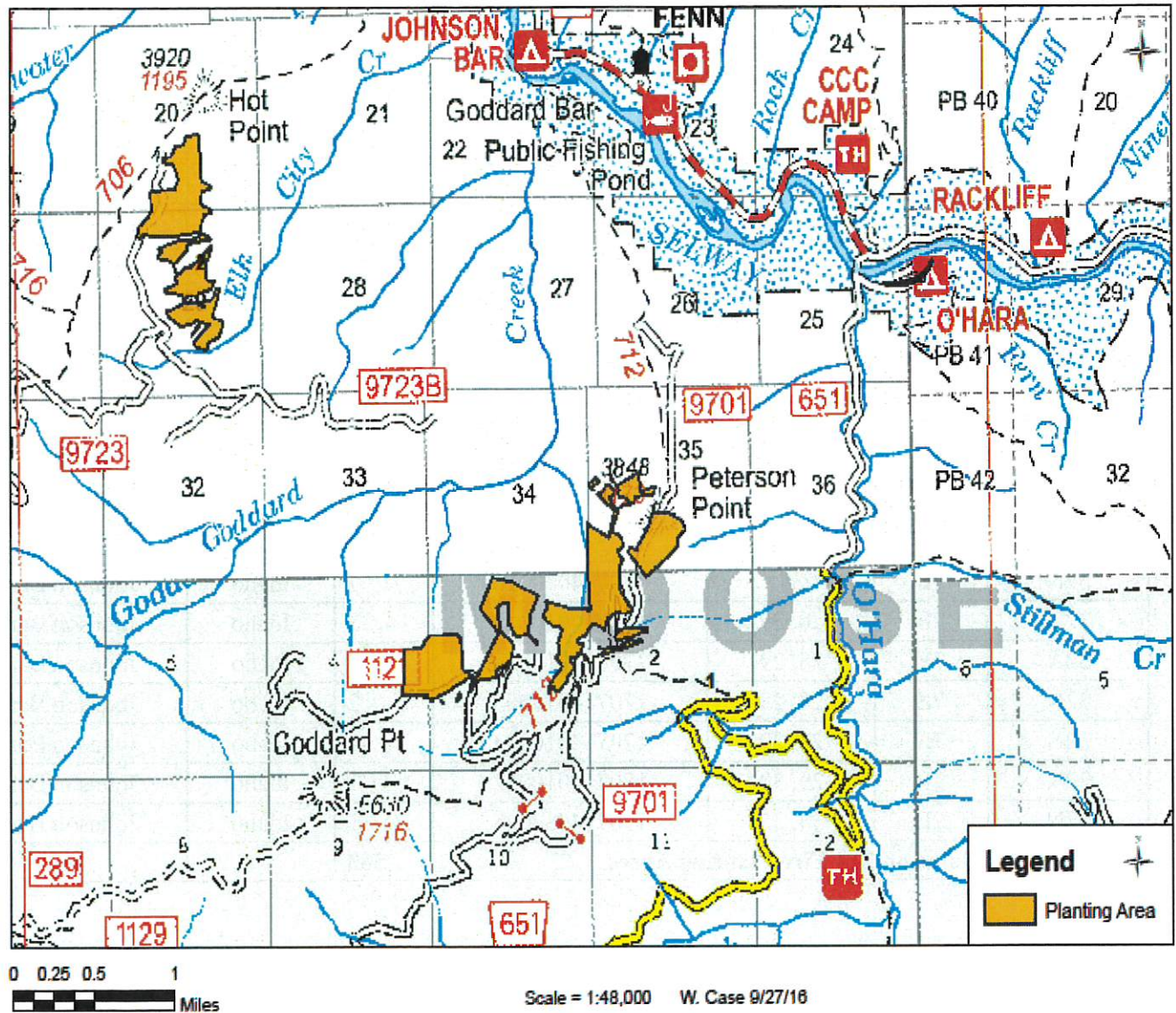
<b>Township</b>	<b>Range</b>	<b>Section</b>	<b>Activity Unit, Forest, District, &amp; Stand No.</b>	<b>Acres</b>	<b>County</b>	<b>Wildfire Name</b>
31N	7E	2	170713020037	3	Idaho	Johnson Bar
31N	7E	2	170713020025	3	Idaho	Johnson Bar
31N	7E	2	170713010067	2	Idaho	Johnson Bar
31N	7E	3	170714030051	5	Idaho	Johnson Bar
31N	7E	3	170714030057	2	Idaho	Johnson Bar
31N	7E	3	170714030068	17	Idaho	Johnson Bar
31N	7E	3	170714030023	2	Idaho	Johnson Bar
31N	7E	3	170714030069	12	Idaho	Johnson Bar
31N	7E	3	170714030024	20	Idaho	Johnson Bar
31N	7E	3	170714030002	1	Idaho	Johnson Bar
31N	7E	3	170714030138	35	Idaho	Johnson Bar
31N	7E	4	170714030020	4	Idaho	Johnson Bar
31N	7E	4	170714030040	1	Idaho	Johnson Bar
31N	7E	4	170714030031	8	Idaho	Johnson Bar
31N	7E	2, 3	170713020038	1	Idaho	Johnson Bar
31N	7E	2, 3	170714030058	1	Idaho	Johnson Bar
31N	7E	3, 4	170714030022	8	Idaho	Johnson Bar
31N	7E	3, 4	170714030032	42	Idaho	Johnson Bar
31N	7E	3, 4	170714030039	3	Idaho	Johnson Bar
31N / 32N	7E	2	170714030074	44	Idaho	Johnson Bar
31N / 32N	7E	3, 33, 34	170714030033	1	Idaho	Johnson Bar
31N / 32N	7E	3, 34	170714030036	3	Idaho	Johnson Bar
31N / 32N	7E	3, 34	170714030034	14	Idaho	Johnson Bar
31N / 32N	7E	3, 34	170714030056	1	Idaho	Johnson Bar
31N / 32N	7E	3, 34	170714030027	10	Idaho	Johnson Bar
31N / 32N	7E	35, 2	170713010010	4	Idaho	Johnson Bar
32N	7E	16, 20	170720100093	16	Idaho	Johnson Bar
32N	7E	16, 17, 20	170720100095	37	Idaho	Johnson Bar
32N	7E	20	170714010032	9	Idaho	Johnson Bar
32N	7E	20	170714010143	9	Idaho	Johnson Bar
32N	7E	20	170714010021	2	Idaho	Johnson Bar
32N	7E	20	170714010030	15	Idaho	Johnson Bar
32N	7E	20	170714010130	17	Idaho	Johnson Bar
32N	7E	20	170714010140	5	Idaho	Johnson Bar

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<b>Township</b>	<b>Range</b>	<b>Section</b>	<b>Activity Unit, Forest, District, &amp; Stand No.</b>	<b>Acres</b>	<b>County</b>	<b>Wildfire Name</b>
32N	7E	20	170720100059	30	Idaho	Johnson Bar
32N	7E	20	170720100096	12	Idaho	Johnson Bar
32N	7E	20	170720100097	3	Idaho	Johnson Bar
32N	7E	20	170720100098	3	Idaho	Johnson Bar
32N	7E	29	170714010045	2	Idaho	Johnson Bar
32N	7E	29	170714010091	18	Idaho	Johnson Bar
32N	7E	29	170714010046	5	Idaho	Johnson Bar
32N	7E	29	170714010050	14	Idaho	Johnson Bar
32N	7E	29	170714010141	8	Idaho	Johnson Bar
32N	7E	29	170714010136	1	Idaho	Johnson Bar
32N	7E	29	170714010031	12	Idaho	Johnson Bar
32N	7E	35	170714030061	5	Idaho	Johnson Bar
32N	7E	35	170714030054	1	Idaho	Johnson Bar
32N	7E	35	170713010026	41	Idaho	Johnson Bar
32N	7E	35	170714030055	1	Idaho	Johnson Bar
32N	7E	35	170714030070	3	Idaho	Johnson Bar
32N	7E	35	170714030053	2	Idaho	Johnson Bar
32N	7E	35	170714030010	7	Idaho	Johnson Bar
32N	7E	20, 29	170714010022	2	Idaho	Johnson Bar
32N	7E	28, 29	170714010089	17	Idaho	Johnson Bar
32N	7E	28, 29	170714010005	2	Idaho	Johnson Bar
32N	7E	28, 29	170714010093	9	Idaho	Johnson Bar
32N	7E	29, 30	170714010052	1	Idaho	Johnson Bar
32N	7E	34, 35	170714030075	1	Idaho	Johnson Bar
<b>Johnson Bar Fire Planting Acres</b>				<b>565</b>		

Map 1 for Wildfire Tree Planting – Moose Creek / Johnson Bar Fire Stands

## Johnson Bar Fire Restoration Planting



Map 2 for Wildfire Tree Planting – Moose Creek / Johnson Bar Fire Stands

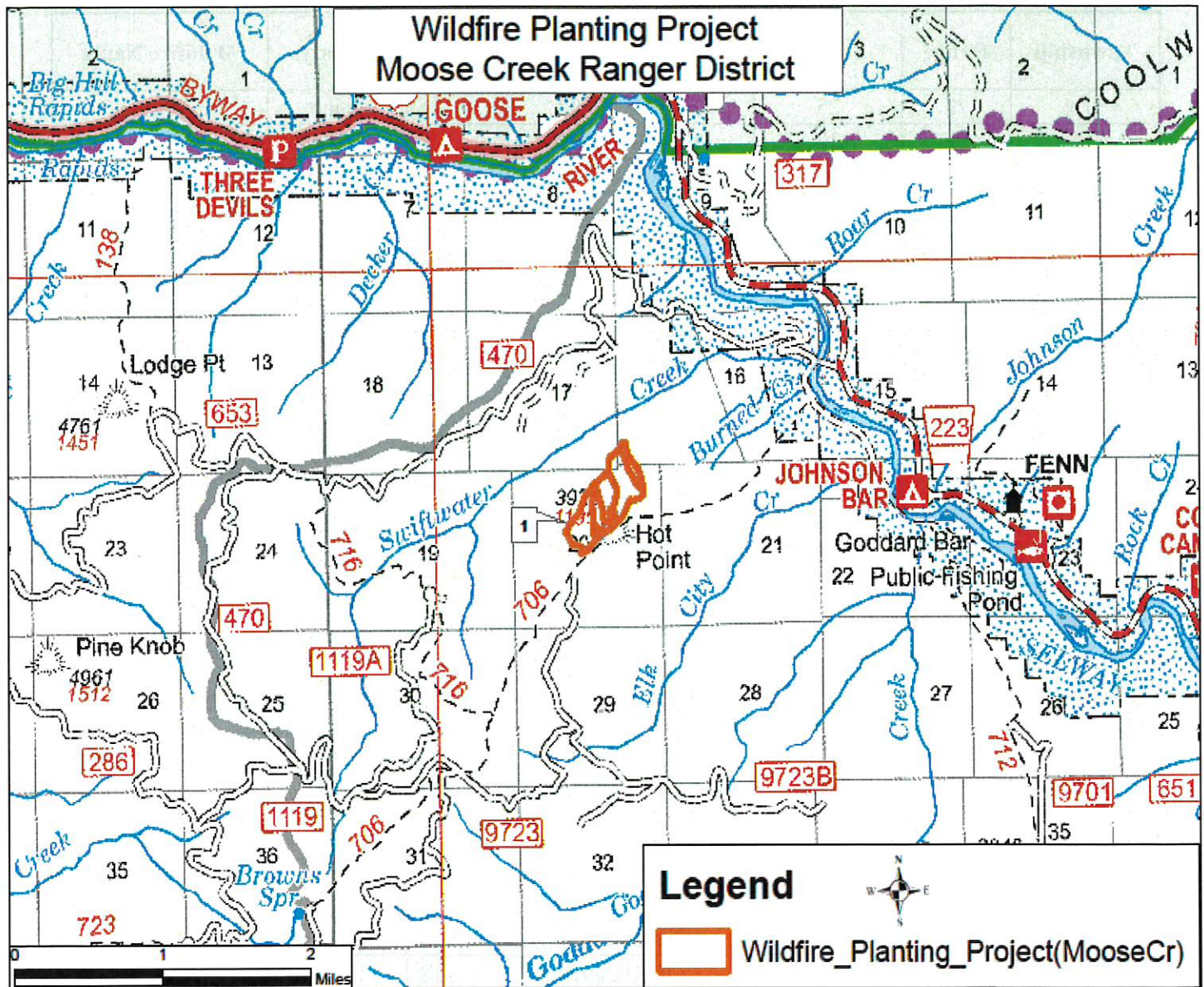


Table 2: Wildfire Tree Planting – Moose Creek / Wash Fire Stands

Township	Range	Section	Activity Unit, Forest, District, & Stand No.	Acres	County	Wildfire Name
31N	7E	25	170712010002	1	Idaho	Wash
31N	7E	30	170712010052	1	Idaho	Wash
31N	8E	10	170711010071	1	Idaho	Wash
31N	8E	10	170711010013	1	Idaho	Wash
31N	8E	11	170711010097	6	Idaho	Wash
31N	8E	11	170711010096	3	Idaho	Wash
31N	8E	12	170711010007	1	Idaho	Wash
31N	8E	12	170711010059	7	Idaho	Wash
31N	8E	12	170711010138	8	Idaho	Wash
31N	8E	12	170711010086	18	Idaho	Wash
31N	8E	12	170711010060	5	Idaho	Wash
31N	8E	12	170711010058	16	Idaho	Wash
31N	8E	12	170711010040	1	Idaho	Wash
31N	8E	12	170711010140	3	Idaho	Wash
31N	8E	13	170710020073	17	Idaho	Wash
31N	8E	13	170710020079	3	Idaho	Wash
31N	8E	13	170710020075	35	Idaho	Wash
31N	8E	13	170710020090	1	Idaho	Wash
31N	8E	30	170712010003	1	Idaho	Wash
31N	8E	1, 12	170711010015	5	Idaho	Wash
31N	8E	10, 11	170711010146	3	Idaho	Wash
31N	8E	11, 12	170711010061	2	Idaho	Wash
31N	8E	11, 12	170711010062	2	Idaho	Wash
31N	8E	12, 13	170711010118	2	Idaho	Wash
31N	8E / 9E	1, 6	170711020015	18	Idaho	Wash
31N	8E / 9E	12, 7	170711010134	6	Idaho	Wash
31N	8E / 9E	12, 7	170711010037	15	Idaho	Wash
31N	8E / 9E	12, 7	170711010042	14	Idaho	Wash
31N	8E / 9E	13, 18	170710020077	9	Idaho	Wash
31N	8E / 9E	13, 18	170710020012	1	Idaho	Wash
31N	9E	6	170711020047	4	Idaho	Wash
31N	9E	6	170711020002	6	Idaho	Wash
31N	9E	6	170711020177	12	Idaho	Wash
31N	9E	6	170711020026	4	Idaho	Wash
31N	9E	6	170711020045	13	Idaho	Wash

*Wildfire Tree Planting – Moose Creek 1 Decision Memo*

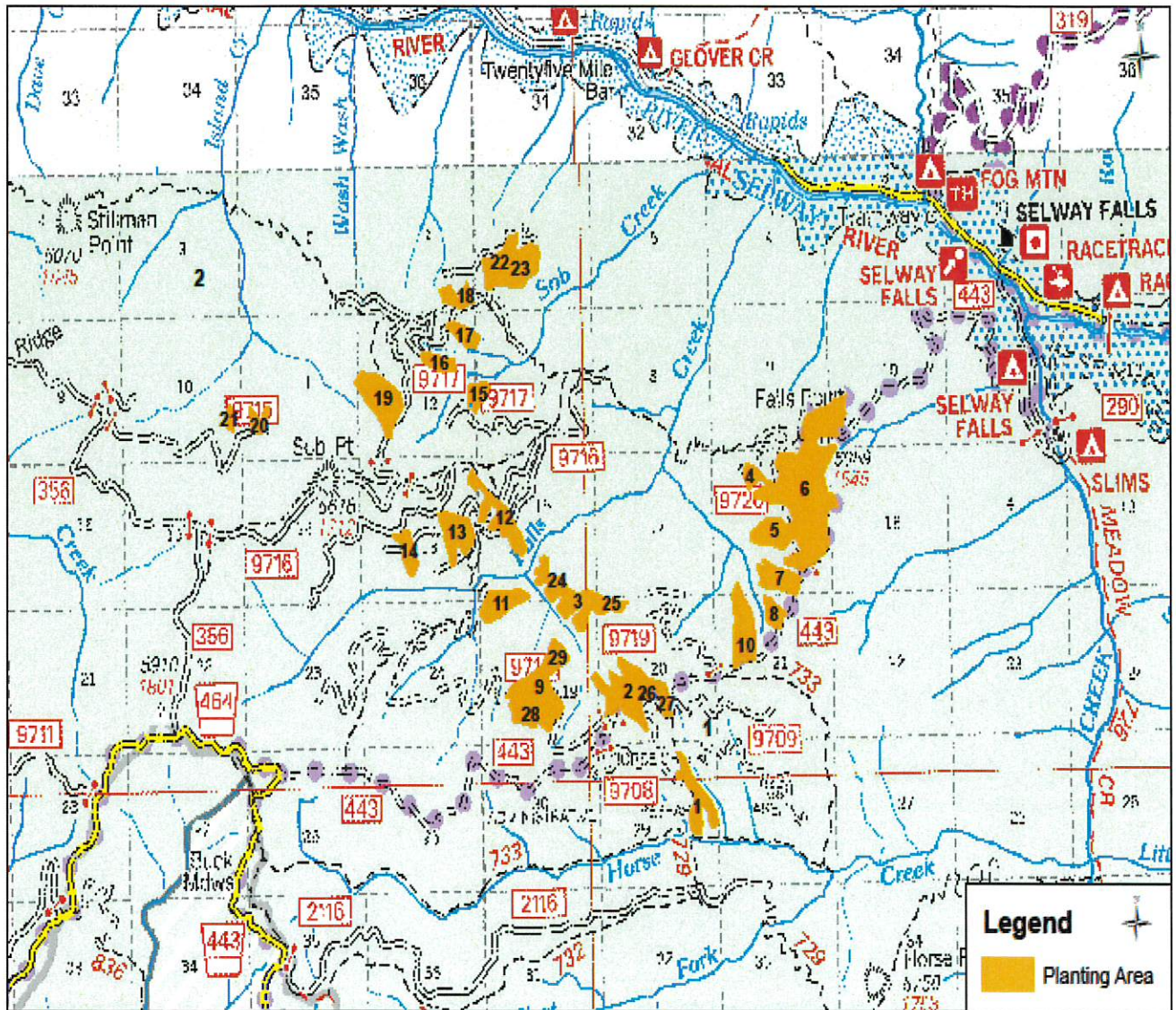
<b>Township</b>	<b>Range</b>	<b>Section</b>	<b>Activity Unit, Forest, District, &amp; Stand No.</b>	<b>Acres</b>	<b>County</b>	<b>Wildfire Name</b>
31N	9E	6	170711020186	5	Idaho	Wash
31N	9E	6	170711020046	11	Idaho	Wash
31N	9E	9	170710010095	2	Idaho	Wash
31N	9E	9	170710010028	4	Idaho	Wash
31N	9E	15	170709010003	4	Idaho	Wash
31N	9E	16	170710020217	2	Idaho	Wash
31N	9E	16	170710020125	9	Idaho	Wash
31N	9E	16	170709010034	22	Idaho	Wash
31N	9E	16	170710020306	1	Idaho	Wash
31N	9E	16	170710020219	7	Idaho	Wash
31N	9E	16	170710020029	1	Idaho	Wash
31N	9E	16	170710020308	13	Idaho	Wash
31N	9E	16	170710020004	20	Idaho	Wash
31N	9E	16	170710020131	6	Idaho	Wash
31N	9E	16	170710020026	15	Idaho	Wash
31N	9E	16	170710020212	7	Idaho	Wash
31N	9E	16	170710020124	3	Idaho	Wash
31N	9E	16	170710010016	6	Idaho	Wash
31N	9E	16	170710020309	10	Idaho	Wash
31N	9E	16	170710020027	16	Idaho	Wash
31N	9E	16	170710020126	3	Idaho	Wash
31N	9E	16	170710020218	1	Idaho	Wash
31N	9E	16	170710020127	9	Idaho	Wash
31N	9E	16	170709010033	18	Idaho	Wash
31N	9E	16	170710020002	5	Idaho	Wash
31N	9E	16	170710020031	1	Idaho	Wash
31N	9E	16	170710020032	2	Idaho	Wash
31N	9E	16	170710020030	11	Idaho	Wash
31N	9E	18	170710020078	10	Idaho	Wash
31N	9E	18	170710020035	19	Idaho	Wash
31N	9E	18	170710020036	1	Idaho	Wash
31N	9E	19	170710020067	17	Idaho	Wash
31N	9E	19	170710020135	12	Idaho	Wash
31N	9E	19	170710020062	9	Idaho	Wash
31N	9E	19	170710020113	2	Idaho	Wash
31N	9E	19	170710020138	22	Idaho	Wash

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<b>Township</b>	<b>Range</b>	<b>Section</b>	<b>Activity Unit, Forest, District, &amp; Stand No.</b>	<b>Acres</b>	<b>County</b>	<b>Wildfire Name</b>
31N	9E	19	170710020112	30	Idaho	Wash
31N	9E	19	170710020137	2	Idaho	Wash
31N	9E	19	170710020208	1	Idaho	Wash
31N	9E	19	170710020209	3	Idaho	Wash
31N	9E	20	170721010173	6	Idaho	Wash
31N	9E	20	170710020303	7	Idaho	Wash
31N	9E	20	170721010257	3	Idaho	Wash
31N	9E	20	170710010003	18	Idaho	Wash
31N	9E	20	170721010169	3	Idaho	Wash
31N	9E	20	170710020025	1	Idaho	Wash
31N	9E	20	170721010168	7	Idaho	Wash
31N	9E	20	170721010171	5	Idaho	Wash
31N	9E	21	170710020007	33	Idaho	Wash
31N	9E	21	170710020001	1	Idaho	Wash
31N	9E	21	170710020008	4	Idaho	Wash
31N	9E	29	170721010048	4	Idaho	Wash
31N	9E	29	170721010163	4	Idaho	Wash
31N	9E	29	170721010178	7	Idaho	Wash
31N	9E	29	170721010177	18	Idaho	Wash
31N	9E	1, 6	170711020005	7	Idaho	Wash
31N	9E	10, 15, 16	170709010002	12	Idaho	Wash
31N	9E	16, 21	170710020006	14	Idaho	Wash
31N	9E	16, 21	170710020005	32	Idaho	Wash
31N	9E	17, 18	170710020053	7	Idaho	Wash
31N	9E	18, 19	170710020051	27	Idaho	Wash
31N	9E	18, 19	170710020052	22	Idaho	Wash
31N	9E	18, 19	170710020108	15	Idaho	Wash
31N	9E	18, 19	170710020110	16	Idaho	Wash
31N	9E	19, 20	170710020028	1	Idaho	Wash
31N	9E	19, 20	170710020020	1	Idaho	Wash
31N	9E	19, 20, 30	170710020019	39	Idaho	Wash
31N	9E	20, 29	170721010273	1	Idaho	Wash
31N	9E	5, 6	170711020049	1	Idaho	Wash
31N	9E	9, 10	170710010027	2	Idaho	Wash
31N	9E	9, 10	170709010001	18	Idaho	Wash
31N	9E	9, 10	170710010026	1	Idaho	Wash
32N	7E / 8E	25, 30	170712010001	1	Idaho	Wash
<b>Wash Fire Planting Acres</b>				<b>915</b>		

Map 3 for Wildfire Tree Planting – Moose Creek / Wash Fire Stands

## Wash Fire Restoration Planting



0 0.250.5 1  
Miles

Scale = 1:48,000 W. Case 9/27/16

